

Keys to Writing Award Winning Nominations

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Introduction

This is a compilation of presentations from the “How to Write Winning Award Nominations” workshop series of the FLC National Meeting. Over the years these sessions have proven to be among the FLC’s most popular events, and there have been many requests to make this information readily available in a single document.

The following suggestions come from four FLC Laboratory Representatives who are quite knowledgeable about writing submissions that impress judges, as their laboratories have won between them over 100 Excellence in Technology Transfer Awards. The four presentations—which cover how an individual laboratory handles the nomination process—are featured in separate sections. These presentations cover the entire practice of producing a high-quality nomination, from preliminary groundwork to final editing. As you prepare your nominations, consider this document to be a handy reference that will help to make the submission process much easier.

Section 1 – Julie Gephart, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Award Statistics

- 55 Excellence in Technology Transfer Awards since 1984
- 2000 Laboratory Director of the Year Award
- 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award in Technology Transfer
- 1986 Harold Metcalf Award

How Does PNNL Do It?

The process of selecting nominees to represent the laboratory begins several months before the FLC's official call for nominations is announced in September.

- **June:** Send out an internal call for nominations, via e-mail and in-house publications.
- **July:** Compile and review “long list” of potential nominees to make a final cut of four nominations.
- **July/August:** Coordinate with writers to prepare narratives for the nominees.

Funding Sources for Preparing Nominations

- The nominee's division
- Centralized (laboratory) funding
- Sponsor or commercial partner

Additional Support Tasks Required to Prepare Nominations

- Text processing
- Technology transfer staff input and review
- Review by the FLC Laboratory Representative
- An objective review by someone not related to the project or nomination preparation process.

Information Gathering

When preparing the narrative, it is a good idea to meet with the researchers under consideration to find out the specifics of their technology transfer effort. Among the questions they should be asked:

- How did the technology come to be?
- What was the commercialization process?
- Were there previous commercialization attempts, such as CRADAs, staff exchanges, etc.?
- How did the partner get involved?
- What organizational support was involved?
- Were there any special efforts made to accomplish technology transfer?
- What were the challenges? Limitations?
- What is the future of the project?
- Was there any leverage off the technology transfer?
- Are there quotes and comments available from the partners?

Additional Tips (courtesy of Phil King, Oak Ridge National Laboratory)

- Focus on degree of perseverance, tenacity or untiring effort required of the individual or team.
- Note improvements in efficiency, cost savings, and environmental impact.
- Write succinctly and briefly, and condense information into powerful, hard-hitting statements.

Section 2 – Kristen Schario, Air Force Research Laboratory, Propulsion Directorate (AFRL/PR)

AFRL/PR Award Statistics

- 18 Excellence in Technology Transfer Awards since 1984

Our Nomination Process

- Notify divisions of the opportunity to nominate their employees.
- Request short summary of potential nominees from the divisions.
- Considering recommendations by the technology transfer manager, the Laboratory Director selects the nominees.
- Divisions are notified of the selections.
- Nominee supervisors write the nomination, with input from the nominees themselves.
- Completed nominations are reviewed by the appropriate staff (e.g. technology transfer, marketing).
- The nominations are reviewed with the following questions in mind:
 - Is it well written?
 - Does it make sense?
 - Does it fit the evaluator's criteria?

Funding Sources for Preparing Nominations

- There are no costs associated with writing the nominations.

Key Advice

- Good science *is not* what's important for the Excellence in Technology Transfer Award. The most important issue is *what did the person do to make the technology transfer happen?*
- Take the time to do a good job in writing the nomination!

Section 3 – Bea Shahin, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (ERDC-CERL)

ERDC-CERL FLC Award Statistics

- Five Excellence in Technology Transfer Awards since 1984

Our Nomination Process

- Contact departments for nomination recommendations.
- In-house panel reviews and screens nominations.
- Researcher who will be nominated and a tech editor collaborate to write submission.
- Final review by FLC Laboratory Representative.

How to Successfully Write a Nomination

- Read the award submission format directions and *follow it* – your submission is one of many that must be read.
- Employ the assistance of a technical editor in writing your submission.
- The technology may be good, but the award is for *transfer and commercialization*.
- Be concise and to the point.
- Don't get flowery with your words—let the facts speak for themselves.
- Stick to the criteria.

Guide to Content to Include in Nomination

- Pre-transfer project history
- Goals of technology transfer
- Collaborative efforts and leverage gained in technology transfer
- Programs and mechanisms used to carry out technology transfer
- Partner involvement
- Major partner “champions” behind technology transfer
- Commercialization process
- Technology origination
- Technology challenges
- User benefits and future potential applications

The Framework of a Former Award Winning Nomination

- Practical commercial or public advancement made by the nominee's efforts.
 - Status, history and barriers of the industry.
 - Program and mechanism used to begin technology transfer process.
 - Initial intentions and objectives of technology transfer.
 - Individuals and organizations instrumental in the early stages of the technology transfer process.
- How the nominee caused the transfer to occur.
 - Stated challenge facing the program.
 - Explained necessity of a team commitment beyond normal duties and expectations.
 - Organization funding commitment and a growing interest in technology applications.
 - New relationships emerging from the project.
- Significance of tangible benefits to industry, state or local governments.
 - Reported growth rate and potential growth rate of a former struggling industry.
 - Listed potential and user benefits, providing examples.

Section 4 – Larry Dickens, Oak Ridge National Laboratory

Oak Ridge National Laboratory Award Statistics

- 33 Excellence in Technology Transfer Awards since 1985
- 1 Laboratory Director of the Year Award
- 1 Representative of the Year Award

The ORNL Nomination Process

- Prior to the FLC Southeast Regional call for nominations, FLC Laboratory Representative notifies researchers, tech transfer staff and line management.
- Request “One Pager” (summary of nomination)—not the award form. The “One Pager” includes:
 - Technology description and intellectual property
 - Technology partner (Who’s problem solved?)
 - Technology’s tangible benefits and significance to recipient.
 - Team members and their contributions
- R&D 100 submissions automatically included.
- Reviewed by ORNL FLC Awards Committee
 - FLC Laboratory Representative
 - FLC Alternate Representative
 - Researcher or Manager from each research directorate submitting nominations
 - Technical Editor
- Efficient selection and critique process with minor incremental investment.

ORNL FLC Awards Committee Mechanics

- Award criteria matrix based on “One Pager.”
- Pre-meeting with packet for each committee member.
- Evaluated and ranked in private.
- Committee meeting for group evaluation and ranking—work to consensus.
- Top submittals identified for regional submission with nominees working with ORNL Technical Editor to produce submittals.
- Iterative critique process.
- Add a photo of the technology/invention.

Why Submit Regionally?

- Unlimited regional submissions
- Limited to four national submissions
- Use regional ranking to determine national submissions
- Independent review.
- It is a great farm system!

After Regional Evaluation...National Submission

- Refine regional submissions for national.
- Iterative critique and edit process.
- Two additional reviews.
- Submit maximum allowed (4).

ORNL'S Time Frame for 2003 Submissions

- Internal request one month before the regional call.
- Provided one extra month for solicitation and preparation.
- Submissions are selected internally and regionally.
- After regional selection began work on national submissions.
- Provided an extra month for national preparation with no selection activity.
- Provided a total of five extra months in the awards process.
- Iterative process enhanced quality.
- Less of a "Crises mode"

Lessons Learned

- More process participants = More submissions
- Researchers receptive to "One Pager"
- Process standardization has increased nomination quality and award rate.
- Technical Editor invaluable.
- Regional submissions provide independent review.
- Get ahead of the official call for nominations.
- More award winners = Increased participation